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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ABU DHABI 001939

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CMC FOR THE COMMANDANT
STATE FOR NEA/FO, NEA/ARP, PM/FO, PM/RSAT, SCA/FO, SCA/PB, SCA/A
DOD/OSD FOR A/S LONG, DAS KIMMITT, KELSO, QUINN, ANDERSON
CENTCOM ALSO FOR MAJ GEN FINDLEY, REYES, RODRIGUEZ
NSC FOR NRAMCHAND, EABRAMS

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SUBJECT: MBZ LOOKS TO U.S. MARINE CORPS FOR TACTICAL TRAINING

Classified by Ambassador Michele Sison, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (S) Summary: Over lunch in Abu Dhabi November 21, Commandant of the Marine Corps General James T. Conway and Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed (MbZ) discussed the dynamics of terrorism, the need to root extremism out of education, and the proper role of the mosque. MbZ said the UAE was taking the fight to al-Qaeda in Afghanistan with no sympathy for terror. He wondered about a possible Arab security role in Iraq. In Pakistan, the principle of stability requires support for Musharraf, said MbZ, who saw no alternative to the current president and chose not to play roulette against the odds. After a discussion of key combat tactics, the Commandant left with three commitments: 1) coordinate the visit of an Osprey to display its capabilities to MbZ, 2) organize an exchange with USMC sniper schools to help hone UAE skills, and 3) compare notes on tracking methods used to train U.S. Marines. End summary.

Defending Against Terror

12. (S) MbZ noted that terrorist tactics of some years ago, and those used by Saddam, were of the caliber of "an exercise" in comparison with the no-holds-barred terrorist operations of today in which anything is possible -- making terror more difficult to defend against. Conway noted that al-Qaeda's willingness to kill Muslims was another paradigm shift. Recalling al-Qaeda's statements after the U.S. Embassy bombings in east Africa killed mostly Muslims, MbZ said Osama bin Laden had dismissed any concern by stating that "Muslims go to heaven," as if Osama had a unique agreement with God. Al-Qaeda has capitalized on Arab weaknesses, he added.

13. (S) MbZ applauded ongoing CT coordination with Washington, but said al-Qaeda is still able to work in (and through) the region. He cited a key problem as education, repeating an oft-expressed concern over Islamist thought in the classroom. When youth are convinced that martyrdom is a "first class ticket to heaven," they take interest more easily -- regardless of economic status. He said UAE citizens drawn to terror tended to come from the middle class. "It's the education system, not the economic situation," that leads minds to the "mosque in a hidden corner of the village" for extremist indoctrination. Interested in Conway's description of programs to teach moderate Islam in Iraqi prisons, MbZ cited the potential value of working with tribes in Afghanistan to cooperate against al-Qaeda as was being done in Iraq. MbZ said a similar effort might be beneficial in Pakistan. The ball is "in our court," said MbZ, to take a stand against extremism. Mosques should preach about religion

and finding peace with God, not politics or economics. Uncontrolled discourse in mosques in Europe leads to serious terror concerns there, he stressed; we should not give the extremists a podium.

Afghanistan

¶4. (S) MbZ said he was convinced that Arabs should not have let the U.S. "go alone" into Afghanistan after 9-11. He expressed pride in the UAE special operations forces now in Afghanistan; "we need to show strength in our area." Conway told MbZ that as U.S. Marines are able to withdraw from Iraq, some might be shifted to Afghanistan. MbZ said al-Qaeda could not be defeated in Afghanistan without crossing the border into Pakistan, where safe haven was easy to come by.

¶5. (S) UAE troops in Afghanistan are participating in the cause against terror, MbZ reiterated, and sending a message to the enemy that they are not interested in taking prisoners. A man with an AK-47 in Afghanistan need not be interrogated, but eliminated. He hoped to see other Arab nations join in the fight. MbZ cited an anecdote of UAE troops entering a mosque to pray in the mountains of Afghanistan and being called "non-Muslim" because they were against Osama bin Laden.

Pakistan -- Supporting Stability and Musharraf

¶6. (S) CT efforts in Pakistan are a difficult balancing act, said MbZ, focusing on the "principle" of supporting stability. Pakistan has 160 million people, over 200 nuclear weapons, over 700 thousand citizens resident in the UAE, and good relations with Iran. MbZ said he must support Musharraf or be stuck with a worse alternative. He

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did not want to risk a Musharraf-Ahmedinejad link if Pakistan's traditional allies backed away. "This is the best choice we have," he asserted, as Musharraf is "the only one" to deal with Pakistan's troubles.

¶7. (S) As a small regional country trying to help Pakistani stability, said MbZ, the UAE compared Musharraf's potential fall to playing roulette against the odds. There is no other candidate. If confronted with the decision of siding with (a potentially anti-Musharraf) U.S. policy, or backing their man, MbZ said "I'll bet on Musharraf." Otherwise, we cannot be certain we will be able to enjoy lunch tomorrow, he said, or meet our children safely at the end of their school day. The UAE lives in a rough neighborhood, he emphasized, and cannot risk further instability. Willing suicide bombers roam Arab societies (he pointed to Saudi Arabia and Yemen in particular), and much of the region lives in a centuries old mentality, MbZ lamented.

Arab Forces in Iraq?

¶8. (S) Asked about the potential for an Arab force to deploy to Iraq, MbZ said "I don't think it will work out," although he felt the Arabs missed a chance to send men to the fight during the early 2007 coalition surge. The biggest block to such a proposal was Arab League Secretary General Amre Moussa, said MbZ, suggesting that the opportunity has been lost for the time being. He pondered how to "indirectly" get Arab forces engaged and said he would consider potential roles and forward his thoughts to the General. MbZ also showed interest in Iraqi desertion rates and levels of commitment to fight anywhere in Iraq (versus only against their sectarian foes).

Snipers, Trackers, and Troop Transports (Osprey)

¶9. (C) Energetically discussing troop rotations, personnel transports, and tactics for snipers and trackers, MbZ showed particular interest in:

--- Conway's offer to have an Osprey helicopter visit the UAE during its period of deployment in (or upon redeployment from) the region

and show MbZ its capabilities;

--- trainers from USMC sniper school to visit the UAE to share tactics in this increasingly important field of anti-terror warfare, including an increased demand for sniper accuracy against moving targets; and

--- an exchange of lessons learned by USMC training programs designed to enhance skills in tracking ("becoming the hunter and not the hunted"), including borrowing expertise from native American trackers and urban tracking skills.

¶10. (C) MbZ discussed elements of the hunt learned in falconry, including the uncanny tracking skills of the falcon. He sought to share the benefits of tracking and sniper skills, which are "close to my heart" and vital in confronting terrorists Qvaried terrain and different environments. A brief discussion on non-lethal defense techniques (crowd-dispersion techniques and stopping vehicles without harming the occupants) augmented the discussion of close-range combat tactics. MbZ noted the complications of hiring contractors for personal protection, while acknowledging that limited personnel resources tend to make outsourcing of protection services logical.

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